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Islamic Bathroom etiquette for Muslims

(All images contained in this document are designed in a manner that is not intended to recreate the creation of Allah!)

Prior to entering the bathroom:

"**This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.**" This verse from Surah 5:3 of the Quran clearly proves that Allah's final Prophet to mankind, Mohammed (P.B.U.H.), has perfected our Way of life; and as such, has completed a favor upon the Muslim ummah. Every aspect of life has been addressed by Islam; so much so, that the enemies of Islam actually mocked the early Muslims due to the fact that Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H.) had even instructed them as to the proper etiquette for answering the call of nature. This fact is evident from a hadith in the collection of Tirmidhi wherein Salman Al-Farsi narrated: "**At the time of the Prophet (P.B.U.H), one of the polytheists said to Salman Al-Farsi mockingly, 'Your**

Prophet has taught you everything, even how to defecate!' Salman confidently replied, 'Yes, indeed!'"

With this being said, this document will present the reader with a comprehensive understanding of the Islamic etiquette for answering the call of nature in accordance with the sunnah of Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H.). Therefore, it is important to note that the Islamic position for answering the call of nature is as follows:

To enter the bathroom with one's left foot first and say: "In the name of Allah. O Allah! I seek refuge in you from male and female noxious beings (devils)."

It is a recommended practice that one should enter the bathroom with their left foot and exit with the right; i.e., contrary to the way one enters the masjid.

This fact is evident from the hadith of Bukhari which reads: "**Ibn Umar put his right foot first, and then when he left (the masjid), he put his left foot first**." Moreover, the evidence for saying: "In the name of Allah and seeking protection against the male and female devils," is found in the hadith of Bukhari, wherein Anas reportedly said "**Whenever the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) entered the privy he would say, 'Bismillah; Allah-humma inni a'udhu bika minal khubuthi wal khaba'ith; i.e., In the name of Allah. O Allah, I seek Refuge with You from the male and female unclean spirits (devils)**.'"

Upon entering the bathroom, if situations are ideal, one should plan not to face or turn their back towards the Qibla with their private parts exposed.

Out of respect for the Qibla, the sacred house in Mecca (Kaaba), a Muslim should refrain from facing or exposing their naked backside in this direction as an act of worship. The evidence for this directive is the hadith of Imam Muslim wherein the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) reportedly said: "**When any one of you sits down to answer the call of nature, he should not face the Qiblah or turn his back towards it**." However, there is a hadith in the collection of bukhari which depicts the Prophet as doing the exact opposite of the above mentioned hadith. The

hadith in question that was narrated by 'Abdullah bin 'Umar reads as follows: "**I went up to the roof of Hafsa's house for some job and I saw Allah's Apostle (P.B.U.H.) answering the call of nature facing Sham (Syria, Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon regarded as one country) with his back towards the Qibla**." Now in view of the above mentioned ahadith, I have included an additional hadith of Bukhari to shed some light on this issue.

In this hadith of Bukhari, Abu Aiyub Al-Ansari reportedly said: "**Allah's Apostle (P.B.U.H.) said, 'If anyone of you goes to an open space for answering the call of nature he should neither face nor turn his back towards the Qibla; he should either face the east or the west.**'" Therefore, if one were to compare this hadith of Bukhari with the other that was narrated by 'Abdullah bin 'Umar, it will become obvious that it is merely 'Abdullah bin 'Umar's perception that the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) had his back directed towards the Qibla. After all, he was atop of a house viewing the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) from afar. The area of Sham is Northwest from Mecca and Medina. so, in reality, the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) could have positioned himself in the westward direction, while it merely appeared as if he positioned his posterior towards the Qibla. Allah knows best! Nevertheless, a hadith in the collection of Abu Dawud erases all doubt on the matter when it reported that Said Marwan al-Asghar narrated: "**I**

saw 'Umar sitting on his she-camel and facing the Qiblah while urinating. I said, 'O father of 'Abdurahman ... is this not forbidden?' He said, 'Certainly not ... This has been prohibited only in open areas. If there is a barricade (or partition) between you and the Qiblah, there is nothing wrong with it."

Upon entering a public restroom, a Muslim should take with them either a bottle of water or dampen a handful of tissue/hand towels to later be used to clean their private parts after answering the call of nature.

When utilizing a westernized public restroom designed to simultaneously accommodate more than one person, such as in an airport, restaurant, shopping mall, etc., a Muslim should take with them a bottle of water to be later used to clean their private parts. If bottled water is not available, one should dampen a handful of tissue/hand towels as a secondary measure. The evidence for this directive is a hadith in the collection of Bukhari wherein Anas bin Malik reported: "**Whenever the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) went to answer the call of nature, I used to bring water with which he used to clean his private parts.**"

Furthermore, another hadith in the collection of Bukhari, narrated by Ibn Mas'ud reports: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) went out to answer the call of nature and asked me to bring three stones.**

I found two stones and searched for the third but I could not find it. So I took a dried piece of animal dung and brought it to him. He took the two stones and threw away the dried piece of animal dung and said, 'This is riks (a filthy thing).'" Thus, proving that a clean substance other than water can be used to clean one's private parts after answering the call of nature.

It is also important to note that it is strictly prohibited to use either bones or dung to clean one's private parts. The evidence for this ruling is the narration of Abu Huraira in the collection of Bukhari wherein he reported: "**Once he was in the, company of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) carrying a water pot for his ablution and for cleaning his private parts. While he was following him carrying it (the pot), the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said, 'Who is this?' He said, 'I am Abu Huraira.' The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said, 'Bring me stones in order to clean my private parts, and DO NOT BRING ANY BONES OR ANIMAL DUNG.' Abu Huraira went on narrating: So I brought some stones, carrying them in the corner of my robe till I put them by his side and went away. When he finished, I walked with him and asked, 'WHAT ABOUT THE BONE AND THE ANIMAL DUNG?' HE SAID, 'THEY ARE OF THE FOOD OF JINNS. The delegate of Jinns of (the city of) Nasibin came to me--and how nice those Jinns were--and asked me for the remains of the human food. I invoked Allah for them that they would never pass by a bone or animal dung but find food on them.'**"

In view of the above mentioned hadith, it should by now be clear to the reader that Islam places great emphasis on cleanliness. As such, it is important to note that the Islamic term for getting rid of impurities from one's body or clothing

is known as Istanja. Istanja is basically a method of cleaning one's body with water after answering the call of nature.

To the skeptic who may feel as though Islam is being impractical when it instructs is followers to purify themselves with water after answering the call of nature, I suggest you ponder over the following scenario presented by the scholars of Islam. Imagine a newborn baby who has just soiled its diaper with urine and feces. Now thinking as a civilized person, should the baby's mother simply remove the impurities by merely wiping them with tissue or should she first wipe away the impurities with tissue and then use water to clean the soiled area? After reflecting upon the above mentioned scenario, I believe it is safe to say that the consensus of the civilized world is, "that the mother should first wipe away the impurities with tissue and then use water to clean the soiled area."

The recommendation for the Muslim answering the call of nature to use a stall instead of a urinal.

It is recommended that the Muslim intending to answer the call of nature in a public restroom should carry the bottled water or handful of damp tissue/hand towels inside of a bathroom stall to clean their private parts versus using a urinal. The reason being, a Muslim must always protect their awrah from

being exposed. The awrah for a male includes the area from his navel to his knees; while the awrah for a female includes her entire body except her face and hands.

As the picture listed above clearly shows, a urinal does not provide one with the highest level of protection; i.e., ensuring that one's awrah is protected from the gaze of an onlooker. The evidence supporting the directive to take every step possible to conceal one's awrah when planning to answer the call of nature is the hadith of Imam Muslim, wherein it is reported: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) used to prefer to go behind a rise in the ground or a garden of date palms**."

Furthermore, if a Muslim is in an open area and cannot find something which can be used to conceal themselves, they should make every effort to move far away from the view of the people before answering the call of nature. This is especially true in the case of defecation, so others cannot hear noxious sounds or smell foul odors.

The evidence for this ruling is a hadith in the collection of Tirmidhi wherein Al Mugheerah bin Shu'bah reportedly said: "**I was with the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) on a journey, when he felt the need to answer the call of nature, he went far away**."

What is more, a Muslim should not greet a person who is answering the call of nature, or even return a greeting. The evidence for this ruling is a hadith collected by Ibn Majah

wherein Jabir ibn ʻAbd-Allah reported: "**A man passed by the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) whilst he was urinating, and greeted him. The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) said to him: 'If you see me in this state, do not greet me, because if you do, I will not respond.**'" Furthermore, the majority of scholars are of the belief that it is makrooh (disliked) to speak in the restroom unnecessarily. This is only logical. A restroom is a place one visits to relieve themselves, not to socialize. In actuality, it is extremely rude to communicate with someone while they are in such an embarrassing position. It is no better than trying to have a conversation with someone while they are trying to perform salat or go to sleep after Isha prayer.

A Muslim should also not urinate into stagnant water, because this could contaminate the water and possibly harms those who use it. The evidence for this ruling is a hadith collected by Imam Muslim wherein Jabir reported: "**The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H) forbade anyone to urinate into stagnant water.**" Furthermore, a Muslim should not urinate by the roadside or in places where people seek shade; because, this is deemed offensive behavior. The evidence for this ruling is a hadith in the collection of Abu Dawud wherein Abu Hurayrah reportedly said: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: 'Fear the two things that bring curses.' They asked, 'What are the two things that bring**

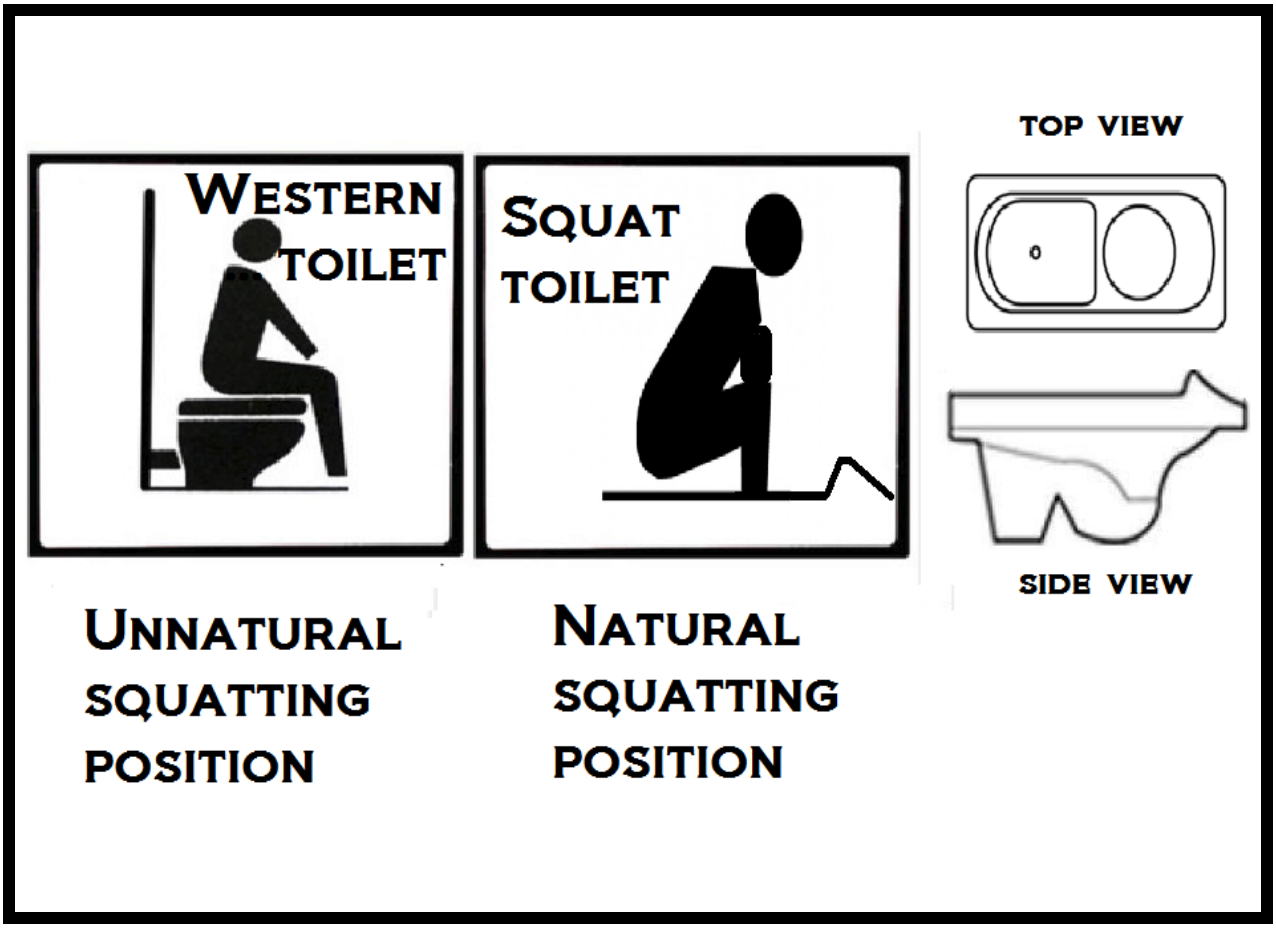
curses, O Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.)?' He said: 'When a person relieves himself in the road where people walk or in the place where they seek shade.'" Lastly, a Muslim should not urinate into a hole because it is the home of some Jinn. The evidence for this ruling is a hadith in the collection of Abu Dawud wherein Qatadah related from 'Abdullah ibn Sarjas who reportedly said: "**The Messenger of Allah forbade urination into a hole. Said Qatadah, 'What is disliked about urinating into a hole?' Said he, 'It is the residence of the jinn**.'"

It is recommended that a Muslim should not removing the garments necessary to answer the call of nature until after they have squatted close to the ground.

A Muslim should not uncover their private parts until after they have squatted close to the ground; because, this is more concealing. The evidence for this recommendation is a hadith in the collection of Tirmidhi wherein Anas reportedly said: "**When the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) wanted to answer the call of nature, he would not lift his garment until he had squatted close to the ground**." However, for those Muslims who live in Western nations that have a tendency to design urinals which make it easy for one man to view the private part of another. Even if one made an

honest attempt to shield their private part, the sheer design of the urinal would prevent one from effectively doing so.

When ready to answer the call of nature, it is important to remember that one should utilize the squatting technique instead of merely sitting on the toilet. Nevertheless, sitting on a toilet is still preferred over standing at a urinal. This recommendation also applies to males. Ideally, when one answers the call of nature while squatting/sitting, the likelihood that impurities will splash onto their body and clothing is greatly reduced.



SQUAT TOILETS

It is also important to note that according to ***Health Benefits of the Natural Squatting Position*** by Jonathan Isbit, there are seven advantages to squatting while answering the call of nature:

1. Squatting makes elimination faster, easier and more complete. This helps prevent "fecal stagnation," a prime factor in colon cancer, appendicitis and inflammatory bowel disease.

2. Squatting protects the nerves that control the prostate, bladder, and uterus, from becoming stretched and damaged.

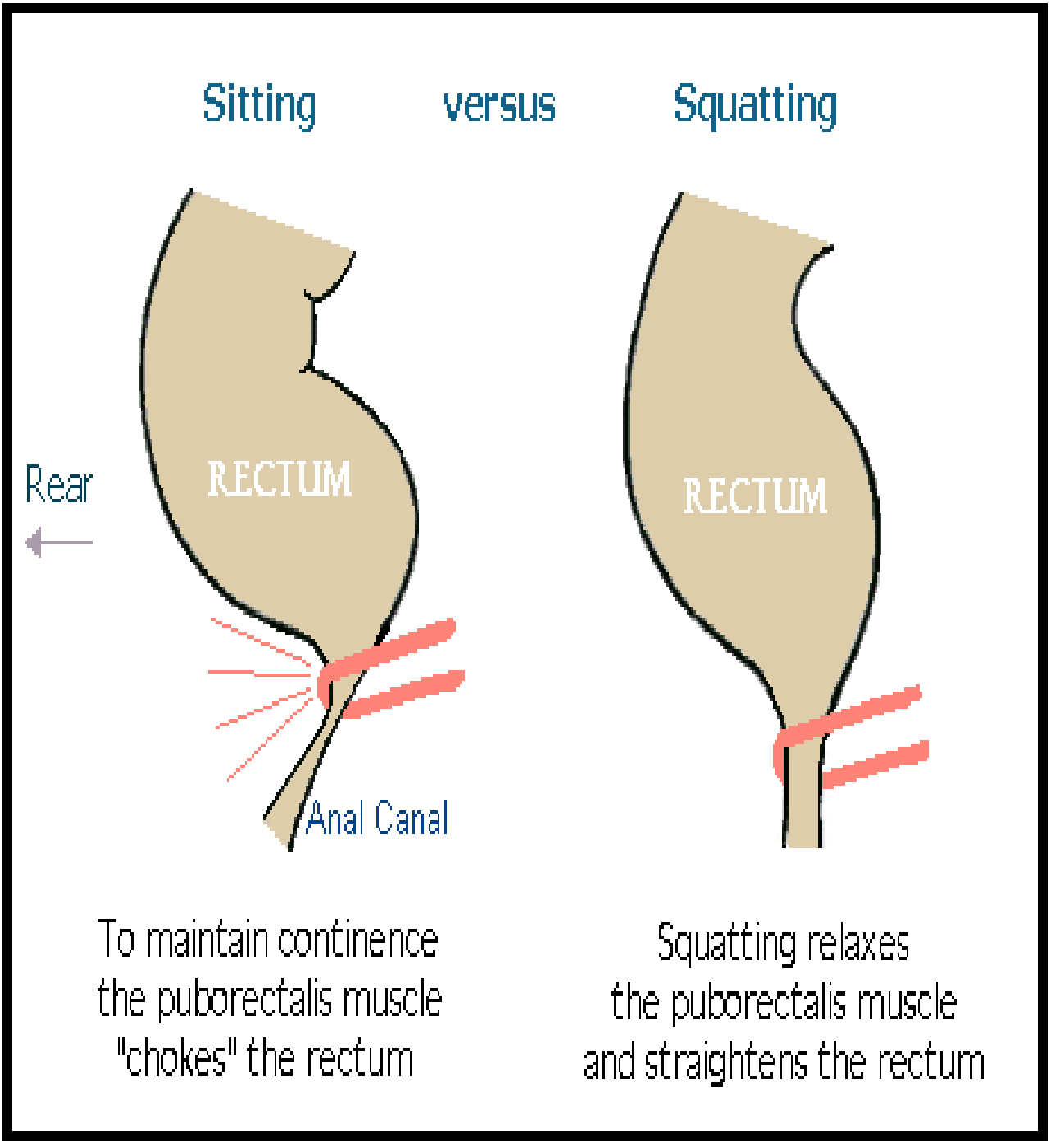
3. Squatting securely seals the ileocecal valve, between the colon and the small intestine. In the conventional sitting position, this valve is unsupported and often leaks during evacuation, contaminating the small intestine.

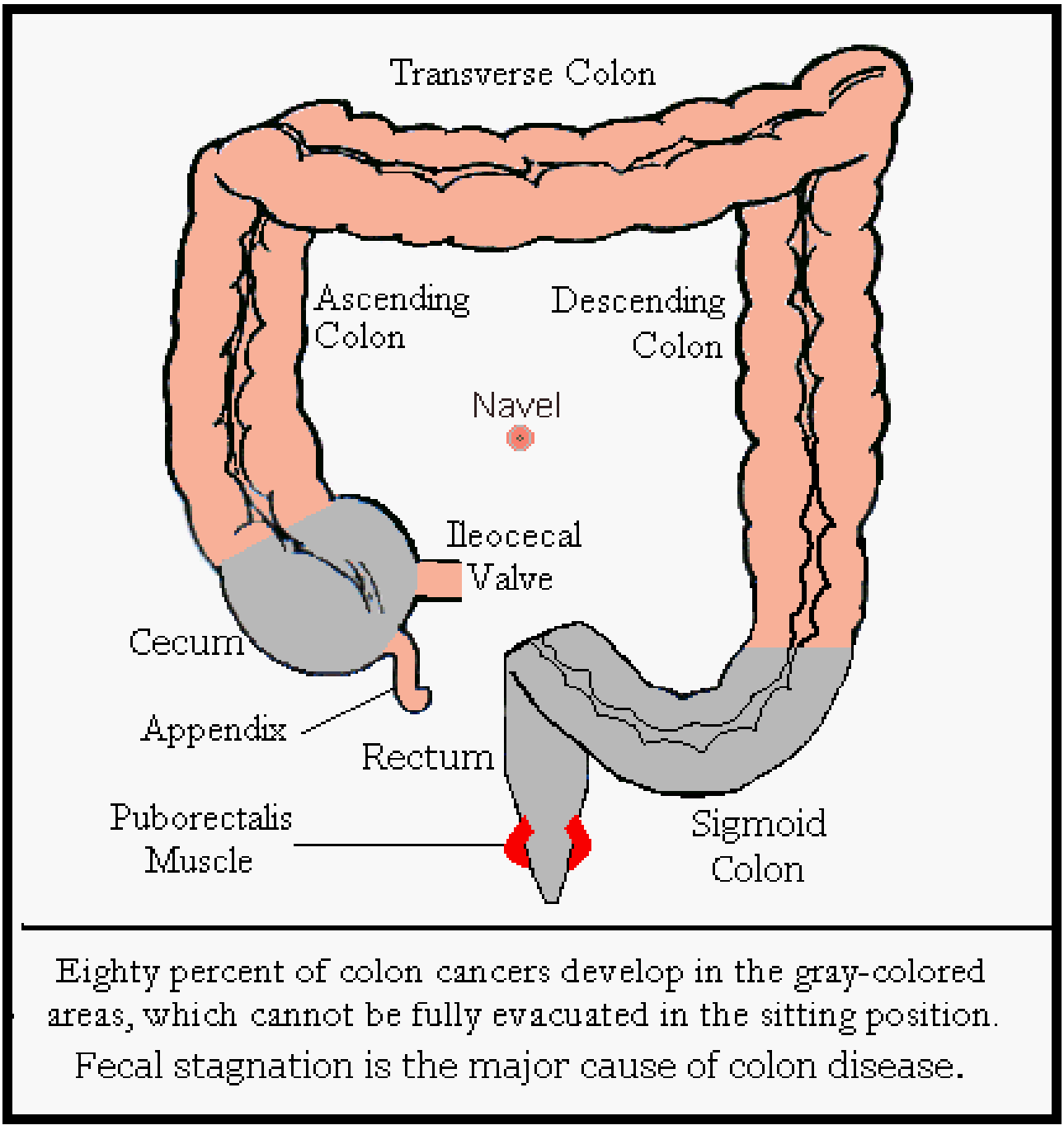
4. Squatting relaxes the puborectalis muscle which normally chokes the rectum in order to maintain continence.

5. Squatting uses the thighs to support the colon and prevent straining. Chronic straining on the toilet can cause hernias, diverticulosis, and pelvic organ prolapse.

6. Squatting is a highly effective, non-invasive treatment for hemorrhoids, as shown by published clinical research.

7. For pregnant women, squatting avoids pressure on the uterus when using the toilet. Daily squatting helps prepare one for a more natural delivery.





Eighty percent of colon cancers develop in the gray-colored areas, which cannot be fully evacuated in the sitting position.

Fecal stagnation is the major cause of colon disease.

In light of the above mentioned information, it is important to note that it is not prohibited for a Muslim to answer the call of nature while standing; it is merely discouraged. The fact of the matter is that there are ahadith

which suggest that the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) actually answered the call of nature while standing and sitting. Thus, proving that both methods are permissible. However, his general practice was to answer the call of nature while squatting. The evidence supporting these positions is the hadith of Bukhari wherein Abdullah bin 'Umar narrated: "**Whenever you sit for answering the call of nature, you should not face the Qibla or Bait-ulMaqdis (Jerusalem).**" I told them. '**Once I went up the roof of our house and I saw Allah's Apostle answering the call of nature while sitting on two bricks facing Bait-ul-Maqdis (Jerusalem) (but there was a screen covering him.**'" Also, Hudhaifa in a hadith collected by Imam Muslim reportedly said: "**Once the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) went to the dumps of some people and passed urine while standing. He then asked for water and so I brought it to him and he performed ablution.**"

Once engaged in the act of answering the call of nature, one should only use their left hand to touch their private parts and to remove any impurities present in those areas.

A Muslim should not touch their private parts with their right hand when answering the call of nature, because, the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) reportedly said: "**When any one of you**

urinates, he should not hold his penis in his right hand or clean it with his right hand; and (when drinking), he should not breathe into the vessel." Furthermore, a hadith of Abu Dawud narrated by Hafsah reports, "**The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) reserved his right hand for eating, drinking, putting on his clothes, taking, and giving. He used his left hand for other actions**." Lastly, another hadith in the collection of Abu Dawud narrated by Ayesha reports: "**The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) used his right hand for purification and eating, and his left for the lavatory and whatever was offensive**."

This directive from Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H.) is a testament to the fact that he was truly a mercy to all that exists. Just ponder over the above mentioned statements, "The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) used his right hand for purification and eating, and his left for the lavatory and whatever was offensive;" for a few seconds. In the midst of the desert where water is generally scarce, meaning that the Muslims would not always be able to wash their hands after answering the call of nature; by restricting them to only use their left hand to clean their private parts, the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) actually instituted a practice that would prevent the believers from contracting bacterial, viral, fungal and parasitic diseases.

According to Norene Anderson of www.livestrong.com in the article titled, **"Diseases You Can Get From Not Washing Your Hands After Bathroom Use,"** there are a number of diseases that one can contract due to having remnants of fecal matter present on hands that come into contact with the mouth; namely:

1. **Hand-Foot-Mouth Disease:** Hand-foot-mouth disease, caused by the coxsackie virus and other enteroviruses, shows symptoms of blister-like bumps in the mouth, on the palms of the hands and bottoms of the feet, reports Children's Hospital Boston. The virus spreads by ingesting food or drink contaminated with fecal content. Thorough washing of the hands following bathroom use is vital in preventing the spread of hand-foot-mouth disease. Since antibiotics are ineffective against viruses, treatment consists of comfort measures for fever and blisters.

2. **Hepatitis A:** Hepatitis A, a highly contagious viral liver infection, manifests with symptoms such as fatigue, yellowing of the skin, dark urine, nausea and vomiting. MayoClinic.com reports that symptoms usually don't appear until a month after incurring the virus, and the symptoms last from less than two to six months. Some people with hepatitis A never show any signs of the disease. Hepatitis A transmission occurs when someone contaminated with the virus does not thoroughly wash his or her hands after bathroom use and handles food consumed by others.

Treatment for a known hepatitis A exposure includes a hepatitis A vaccine within two weeks of exposure.

3. **Shigellosis:** Shigellosis is a bacterial infection with symptoms that include watery diarrhea, abdominal cramps and fever. If the disease progresses to dysentery, the stool contains mucus, blood and pus. Shigellosis spreads easily from one person to another by ingesting food contaminated by infected people who do not use adequate hand-washing technique with soap and water after using the bathroom. The Merck Manuals Online Medical Library states that symptoms usually resolve within four to eight days. Treatment with antibiotics such as azithromycin or ciprofloxacin is prescribed, if the infection is severe.

4. **Giardiasis:** Giardiasis is a parasitic illness of the intestine with symptoms such as gas, cramping and diarrhea. Giardiasis spreads easily by drinking infected water from untreated sources or by hand-to-fecal contact. FamilyDoctor.org reports that workers in daycare centers should use thorough hand-washing techniques after diaper changes to help prevent the spread of giardiasis from one child to another.

It is also worth mentioning that another directive of Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H.) , namely to use dirt to clean/treat impurities has been supported by modern science. In 2007, researchers at Arizona State University revealed that Green

French clay could kill off Staphylococcus aureus, methicillin-resistant S. aureus (MRSA), penicillin-resistant S.aureus (PRSA), pathogenic Escherichia coli (E.coli) and Mycobacterium ulcerans, a germ related to leprosy and tuberculosis that causes the flesh-eating disease Buruli ulcer. Also, Aleksandra Kubiak and other researchers at the University of Nottingham and the University of Maastricht have utilized a strain of harmless bacteria that is widespread in soil (Clostridium sporogenes) to treat cancer.

It is recommended that on should either clean the soileds area at least three times or as many times as needed to remove the impurities; however, the subsequent cleaning should be done in odd number units.

Any impurity on one's private parts should be washed or wiped three times or an odd number of times greater than three. The evidence for this ruling is a hadith in the collection of Ibn Majah wherein ʻAiesha reported: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) used to wash his posterior three times. Ibn ʻUmar said: 'We (the companions) did this too and found it to be a healing and cleansing**.'" Also, in a hadith collected by Ahmad, Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) reportedly said: "**When anyone of you cleans himself (with stones or similar material)**

let him use an odd number." Moreover, in instances where one's hands have an unpleasant odor after answering the call of nature, steps should be taken to remove the undesired smell. The evidence for this ruling is a hadith in the collection of Abu Dawud wherein Abu Hurairah reported: "**When the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) relieved himself, I used to bring him a container of water. He would cleanse himself, then rub his hands against the soil**." It is also important to note that a female should start from the front of her private part and then descend towards her rear in order not to defile her vagina. Even when a baby girl is being cleaned after soiling her diaper, one must always wipe from front to back to prevent infections.

After answering the call of nature, a Muslim should say: "Ghufraanak (I seek Your forgiveness)."

After answering the call of nature, a Muslim is encouraged to say, "O Allah, I seek your forgiveness." The evidence for this recommendation is a hadith in the collection of Tirmidhi wherein Aiesha reportedly said: "**When the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) used to come out of the toilet, he would say, 'Ghufraanak.' (I ask You [Allah] for Your forgiveness)**." There is also another duah which is popular among Muslims; namely, "**O Allah I seek Your pardon. All praises are due to Allah who has taken away**

from me discomfort and granted me relief." However, this version does not have a sound chain of narrators.

Upon leaving the toilet, a Muslim should remove all impurities from their clothes and ensure that no residual urine or blood remains on their underwear.

One should purify themselves whenever an impure substance falls upon them such as semen, feces, urine, or vomit by washing their body and the garment with water until the impurity is no longer present. One's underwear should also be inspected for traces of residual urine. If the stain is difficult to remove despite repetitive cleaning, then it may be overlooked. If the impurity is no longer visible on the soiled area, then one washing of the garment is sufficient. It is also important to note that the bottom of one's clothes is cleaned by default whenever one walks across the dirt of the ground. A hadith narrated by Abū Hurairah in the collection of Abu Dawud verifies this fact when it says: **"If one of you steps in some filth while wearing shoes, the dirt will purify them."** Also, a hadith in the collection of Imam Muslim narrated by Ayesha reports: **"I used to scratch the sperm from the Messenger's clothes if it was dry, and washed if off if it was still wet; then he would pray in those clothes."**

It is also important to note that the urine of a male baby who has not been weaned can be overlooked and pardoned. It is sufficient to simply sprinkle water over the urine. The evidence for this ruling is the hadith in the collection of Bukhari, narrated by Umm Qais; wherein it was reported: **"She came to the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) with her un-weaned son. After a while, the baby urinated on the Messenger of Allah's (P.B.U.H.) lap. The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) called for some water, which he sprinkled over his clothes, and did not give them a complete washing."** Moreover, the hadith of Abu Dawud reports: **"Ali narrated that the Messenger of Allah said, 'The urine of a baby boy should have water sprinkled upon it. The urine of a baby girl is to be washed off.' Qatadah says: 'This refers to a male baby that has not yet begun to eat. If he already eats, then the garment is to be washed.'"** Lastly, a hadith collected by Abu Dawud reports: **"A woman came to the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) and said 'O Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.), I do not have but one outfit and I have my monthly period when I am wearing it, and sometimes I see blood on it. What should I do?' The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) replied: 'After the menstrual cycle is over, wash the blood stained area and then you can pray with it.' The woman said 'O Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.), what if the blood traces don't come out?' He replied: 'It suffices for you to clean it with water, and the traces of blood will not**

harm you.' If the impurity is not visible, such as urine, it is sufficient to wash it once."

Upon leaving the bathroom, a Muslim should exit with their right foot first.

It is a recommended practice that one should exit the bathroom with their right foot first; basically, the opposite way in which one exits the masjid.

The evidence for this directive is a hadith in the collection of Bukhari which reads: "**Ibn Umar put his right foot first, and then when he left (the masjid), he put his left foot first.**" These practices are not obligatory; however, they are ideal for helping one keep Allah on their mind in every act that they do throughout their lives.